



NEWS RELEASE

1303 SW First American Place, Suite 100, Topeka, KS 66604-4040
Voice (785) 271-2701, FAX (785) 271-2708, WEB www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – October 11, 2006
Contact- Harold Alford (785) 271-2701

USDA Awards \$297,045 Rural Development Grant For Telemedicine Service In Kansas

Topeka, KS. – USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks congratulated Ellsworth County Medical Center (ECMC) that was selected for \$297,045 in Agency funding for telemedicine services. Selection of the project, approved under the USDA's *Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program*, was announced by Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas Dorr last week.

"This program connects communities to medical services and educational opportunities they would not otherwise have," said Dorr. "Our focus is to ensure that all rural Americans have access to state of the art services through our rapidly expanding telecommunications system."

Ellsworth County Medical Center is a Critical Access Hospital with five outlying clinics, providing medical services to nearly 40,000 rural Kansans in Ellsworth, Russell, Barton, and Lincoln counties. The scope of the project is to establish a network to connect physician specialists at Salina or Wichita with ECMC and medical clinics, for early diagnosis of trauma patients, and installation of special videoconferencing equipment.

USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks commented, "Telemedicine makes it possible for patients in rural areas to receive the same high level of care available to the residents of major metropolitan areas. This funding investment will bring specialized care to the patients of the remotest rural clinics and represents the Agency's commitment to the future of rural communities in Kansas,"

The Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant program (DLT) was created to encourage, improve, and make affordable the use of telecommunications, computer networks and related technology for rural communities to improve access to educational and/or medical services.

In his remarks, Banks further stated, "Kansas communities can benefit from the opportunities provided by the distance learning and telemedicine program by building partnerships and demonstrate how the funding enhances rural health care or educational needs, to ensure that rural Kansans have the access to modern technology and telemedicine services," said Banks.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that support increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life of the State's rural residents. The Agency provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure in rural America.

For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development programs, interested parties may call the Agency's state headquarters at 785-271-2700 or log onto the state's USDA Rural Development website at: www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks

USDA Rural Development – Committed to the Future of Rural Communities.

- end -